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SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MINC PRAISES APPOINTMENT OF S/E STERN  
AND LOOKS FORWARD TO A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

REF: A) 2008 BRASILIA 1462 B) 2008 BRASILIA 1559

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Minister of the Environment, Carlos Minc, sees the twin issues of climate and energy as an opportunity for increased USG and Government of Brazil (GOB) cooperation. He sees Brazil as playing the role of a bridge between the developed nations and the G-77 in upcoming climate negotiations. He was also very enthusiastic about the appointment of S/E Todd Stern and said that he would welcome an early visit by S/E Stern to discuss climate change policies in the lead up to the December 2009 meeting in Copenhagen. Minc also reported that Brazil was almost ready to conclude the debt swap with the United States under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, praised U.S. position changes on Mercury, and pressed for the USG to consider ratifying the Convention on Biodiversity. Given Brazil's importance in the climate debate, Minc's ideological leanings, and his influence within the administration, an early meeting between S/E Stern and Minc would present a perfect opportunity to increase cooperation between the USG and GOB in these negotiations. END SUMMARY

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BACKGROUND  
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12. (SBU) On March 5, 2009 Ambassador Sobel met with Minister of the Environment, Carlos Minc. The two had a wide ranging conversation regarding the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, Climate Change, Access and Benefit Sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and potential areas of cooperation between the United States and Brazil. Minister Minc feels the new administration is creating space in which the United States and Brazil can work cooperatively on a number of environmental issues. Minc specifically cited the U.S. position change in Nairobi during talks on mercury, a special personal interest of Minc's, as commendable. After breaking into chants of "Obama, Obama," the Minister stated that he has great hopes for the Obama administration and that he is eager to begin working with the administration at the highest levels.

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CLIMATE CHANGE  
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13. (U) Both Ambassador Sobel and Minister Minc agreed that there is a nexus between energy and climate change and that the combination of these two issues is becoming increasingly important for both countries. They also agreed that both issues represent areas in which the United States and Brazil could mutually benefit from increased cooperation.

14. (SBU) Minc expressed his view that Brazil has made significant strides over the last year in the realm of climate change. He pointed to GOB's adoption of a National Plan on Climate Change (REFTEL A), the creation of the Amazon Fund (REFTEL B), and the setting of domestic targets. The Minister told Ambassador Sobel that the GOB has altered its strategy within the G-77 to one that advocates for other developing countries to take on specific responsibilities, different than those of the developed nations, but nonetheless identifiable. (NOTE: The Embassy has not yet seen this shift reflected in the Ministry of External Relations, which is the lead GOB agency for climate change negotiations. This disconnect could indicate that changes are in the works, but it could also reflect Minister Minc's tendency to say what he would like to be true, rather than what has actually occurred. END NOTE). The Minister also mentioned that it was the GOB's opinion that these governments would need help in the areas of funding, technology transfer, and capacity building to achieve these goals.

15. (SBU) The Minister conceded that some of the G-77 nations, specifically China and India present a particular challenge in this regard, but that he envisioned Brazil playing the role of a bridge between the developed nations and the developing in these negotiations, with the eventual goal of finding an outcome to which both parties could agree and fulfill. He envisioned an opportunity for moving from what he called a "less-less" scenario in which developed countries failed to carry through on their commitments and developing nations set unambitious targets, to "more-more" scenario in which both groups undertook and met appropriate and meaningful goals. He called on the United States to bridge these divides by setting a strong example on these issues. Minc agreed with Ambassador Sobel that both countries seemed to be moving toward a common position in support of emissions caps. (NOTE: As with Minc's early comment, this may be more a reflection of his personal opinion than the government's official position. END NOTE)

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16. (SBU) Minister Minc was also very encouraged by the appointment of S/E Stern to coordinate US climate change policy. He said that S/E Stern sounded "like a messiah" who would be leading US efforts to re-engage with the international community on climate change. He welcomed the appointment and said that S/E Stern would be welcomed here in Brazil, Minc himself would be interested in meeting with him, and concluded Stern should visit at the soonest possible opportunity. The Minister indicated that this would be a positive step forward and would help the United States and Brazil to find common ground in advance of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change negotiations in Copenhagen this December.

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TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION ACT  
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17. (U) Minister Minc told Ambassador Sobel that the agencies involved in the Tropical Forest Conservation Act have completed their legal reviews and that they were close to concluding the agreement. According to Minc, the main outstanding item was the need on the GOB's part to conclude its agreement with the NGO, the Brazilian Bio-Diversity Fund (FUNBIO), which has been selected to administer the project resources. He expected that their agreement should be concluded in the next week or so. He also expressed a hope that future rounds of debt swap may be offered under the TFCA and that they would face fewer bureaucratic obstacles and would be much faster to conclude once the first round is complete. Minc indicated that he would be very eager to pursue further debt swap installments once this one is finalized.

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ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING  
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18. (U) Minister Minc mentioned at two different points during the conversation that he was disappointed by the fact that the US had not yet ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and, by extension, was not a party to its provisions on Access and

Benefit Sharing (ABS). He expressed an opinion that this agreement was critical, particularly in making sure that developing countries rich in biodiversity, such as Brazil, were not taken advantage of by developed nations. He feels that it is odd that the United States is the only major nation that has not ratified the agreement. Minc expressed a hope that the Obama administration would make ratification of the CBD a priority.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: Minc's eagerness to work with the Obama administration on climate change was very apparent. While the Ministry of the Environment is not the lead agency in international climate change negotiations, the MMA under Minc's leadership has shown a desire and ability to shift GOB policy on the issue. In Minc's words, his ministry has continually "found a way" to influence the debate and encourage official policy to more closely resemble that of the MMA. It is likely that his ability to do so is in part due to Minc's strong connections within the Lula administration, particularly with Lula's influential chief of staff - Dilma Rousef. An early visit by S/E Stern could help Minc to keep up this momentum and push GOB climate policies on the international scale to be ever more aligned with USG interests going into Copenhagen. END COMMENT.

SOBEL